

Minutes
Military Family Readiness Council Meeting
June 25, 2014

The Military Family Readiness Council Meeting convened 1:30 – 3:00 p.m. in the Pentagon Library and Conference Center, Room B6, on June 25, 2014. The meeting was chaired by Hon. Jessica Wright, under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness.

1. Represented organizations:

a. Members attending:

- Hon. Jessica Wright – under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness
- Ms. Barbara Thompson – director, Office of Family Policy/Children and Youth, director, Office of Special Needs
- Ms. Jeanne Chandler, wife of Sgt. Maj. of the Army Raymond Chandler
- Ms. Christina Vine – U.S. Army, Army active-duty spouse representative
- Ms. Emily Fertitta – U.S. Marine Corps Reserve spouse
- Rear Adm. Sean Buck – U.S. Navy, director, Twenty-First Century Sailor Office (N17)
- Ms. Kristy Ortega – U.S. Navy spouse
- Brig. Gen. Patrick Doherty – U.S. Air Force, director of Air Force Services
- Ms. Jeanne Benden – Air National Guard spouse representative
- Ms. Kathy Moakler – National Military Family Association

b. Representatives of members attending:

- Ms. Diane Randon – U.S. Army, representing Lt. Gen. David Halverson
- Ms. Kerry Lewis – U.S. Marine Corps, representing Brig. Gen. Russell Sanborn
- Sgt. Maj. William Harvey – U.S. Marine Corps, representing Sgt. Maj. of the Marine Corps Michael Barrett
- Force Master Chief Nancy Hollingsworth – U.S. Navy, representing Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy, Mike Stevens
- Chief Master Sgt. Sandra Pfeffer – U.S. Air Force, representing Mrs. Athena Cody
- Brig. Gen. Dawne Deskins – U.S. Air Force, representing Lt. Gen. Stanley Clarke

c. Also present:

- Ms. Stephanie Barna – Acting ASD (R&FM)
- Ms. Rosemary Williams – DASD (MC&FP)
- Col. Gina Humble – U.S. Air Force OJCS, vice director, J1
- Sgt. Maj. Bryan Battaglia – U.S. Marine Corps, senior enlisted advisor to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
- Dr. Jack Smith, M.D. – OASD (HA)
- Dr. Ed Tyner – ODASD (MC&FP)
- Mr. Anthony Wickman – National Guard Bureau

- Ms. Stacy Barnes – OASD (RA)
- Cmdr. Peter Hoegel – U.S. Navy, ODASD (MC&FP)

The public submission received in advance of the June 25, 2014, meeting is contained in Enclosure 1.

2. Purpose of the meeting: The purpose of this meeting was to review previous business, receive informational briefings and to discuss the annual council recommendations to be sent forward for consideration by the secretary of defense. A full transcript of the meeting and attendance of members and advisers present is available.

3. Introduction and welcome: Navy Cmdr. Peter Hoegel, designated federal officer, opened the meeting by welcoming council members, advisers and public guests. He added that in his designated federal officer capacity, it was his duty to ensure that the meeting complied with the standards set by the Federal Advisory Committee Act and Department of Defense Instruction 5105.04. He then proceeded with a review of the rules and regulations the council must follow while conducting business and noted that the council was officially short of a quorum. While no votes could be taken, administrative matters could be covered and planned briefings conducted. Further, he advised that minutes from the meeting would be posted within 30 days to the council page hosted by Military OneSource, and all submissions presented to the council for review would be available upon request. Concluding his comments, he turned the floor over to the chairperson, Mrs. Jessica Wright, under secretary of defense for personnel and readiness. Mrs. Wright welcomed all present, thanking them for their attendance and introduced important guests. She then advised that the lack of a quorum concerned her greatly and that she would personally call each council member after the day's meeting to gauge their continued interest in participation. If a council member was no longer interested in being part of the MFRC, a search for an alternative representative would commence. Finally, she added that while she did understand that at times there would be scheduling conflicts or emergencies, regular attendance was necessary in order for the council to be able to conduct business. Concluding her opening comments, Mrs. Wright turned the floor over to Cmdr. Hoegel to review previous council business.

4. Council business review and discussion: Four business topics were reviewed and discussed by the council: public submissions, service policy changes, 2013 annual report recommendations and potential council focus areas for 2014.

a. Review of public submissions: To open the discussion, Mrs. Wright reviewed a public submission received by the council, a request by the American Military Partner Association, for the council's review of the top six needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender military spouses and their families. These needs include transitioning from active duty and accessing veterans benefits, Department of Defense nondiscrimination policy including sexual orientation, status of forces agreements and outside the OCONUS command sponsorship, protection for military families stationed in non-marriage equality states, military chaplain and counseling support, and respecting transgender troops and their families. Mrs. Wright advised that OUSD (P&R) would review the questions and respond to the American Military Partner Association.

b. Review of service policy changes: Cmdr. Hoegel briefly outlined two policy changes, one in the Navy and one in the Marine Corps, enacted since August 2013 that impact the interests of military family members. In November 2013, the Navy published NAVADMIN 304/13, "Enrollment in the Exceptional Family Member Program," which directs commands to review the EFMP-enrolled sponsors within their units and ensures service members have a current EFMP enrollment status. Shortly thereafter, the Marine Corps published Marine Corps Order 1700.38, "Family Member Employment Assistance Program," which expands on the key concepts of the program. Key changes from the previous Marine Corps Order include segmenting the concept of operations into three major elements (employment resources, career education and training, and career coaching), establishing a directive to collaborate with other Marine and Family Division programs to fully assist family members with employment, and incorporating provisions of the order into an Inspector General Functional Area Checklist.

c. Overview of annual report recommendations: Cmdr. Hoegel provided an overview of the Department of Defense Military Family Readiness Council 2013 annual report to Congress. He specifically outlined three recommendations put forth by the Military Family Readiness Council and the resulting actions taken to address each recommendation:

- Recommendation 1: Recommend that the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs Working Group preparing the report to Congress required by section 735 of the National Defense Authorization Act of fiscal year 2013 consider and review reports submitted by the Children's Hospital Association and the Military Special Needs Network.

- Resulting action for recommendation 1: A working group was established within the OSD (HA) to conduct a study in response to the Section 735 reporting requirement. The working group is currently preparing the report in collaboration with subject matter experts and stakeholders within and outside the Department of Defense, including reviewing the aforementioned reports. This topic was covered in depth at the November 2013 Military Family Readiness Council meeting.

- Recommendation 2: Recommend the continued focus on standardization and consistency of Exceptional Family Member Program policies across all military services as service members transition between installations and from service to civilian life, including collaboration and continuity with community resources.

- Resulting action for recommendation 2: The Department of Defense currently is developing an Exceptional Family Member Program policy to improve standardization of the program services across the services. In addition to this policy, a multi-phased functional analysis is being conducted to provide an in-depth analysis of the current program policies, business processes, forms and databases in each service. The council will receive a brief today by Dr. Ed Tyner on the progress made thus far.

- Recommendation 3: Recommend that the Department of Defense improve communication of existing services to service members and families and further analyze how end-users within the Reserve Component, geographically dispersed and active-duty service members and families who live on and off installations learn about services available to military members and their families.

- Resulting action for recommendaiton 3: The Department of Defense will continue implementing multiple outreach efforts to improve communication of existing services to service members and families, using a wide array of delivery methods. The council will receive a brief today by National Guard Bureau representative Mr. Tony Wickham on the progress made thus far.

d. Council focus areas for 2014: Cmdr. Hoegel closed the old business review discussion with a restatement of the council's four focus areas for 2014. He advised that at the end of the day's council meeting a discussion over new focus area options and possible additions would be conducted. The current council focus areas include: (1) review of the state of the Exceptional Family Member Program (briefing to be provided today), (2) review the network of family programs supporting the National Guard and reserve (briefing to be provided today), (3) review of transition programs (briefing will be provided at a follow-on meeting) and (4) review of programs supporting military spouses (briefing will be provided at a follow-on meeting).

5. Brief to the council – Exceptional Family Member Program standardization: Cmdr. Hoegel introduced Dr. Ed Tyner for an update brief on the status of the Exceptional Family Member Program standardization project.

a. Summary: Dr. Tyner stated that a multi-phased functional analysis was systematically and methodically conducted department-wide to provide an in-depth examination of the current program policies, business processes, forms and databases used by each service. The analysis resulted in the identification of 10 recommendations which were then consolidated into five focus areas requiring Department of Defense action: identification and enrollment, assignment coordination, family support, technology and communication. Each of the services collaborated and participated fully in the analysis process, and the project staff is now ready to phase in the service leadership and get their questions and feedback.

b. Discussion: Following Dr. Tyner's brief, Mrs. Wright opened the floor for questions and discussion. Rear Adm. Buck expressed concern over the use of the recommended online enrollment form and asked whether it would be incrementally introduced since there were large sections of the Navy, particularly medical and education staff, which do not have access to the central Department of Defense information technology system. Dr. Tyner replied that the program staff was looking at all options for implementation, that it was still early in the process and that they will not move too fast. Mrs. Wright added that OUSD (P&R) will review the recommended implementation process and ensure that it is implemented successfully. Cmdr. Hoegel reminded council members that in the preparatory meeting for the session there was a discussion about reports alleging that service members are often required to have multiple Exceptional Family Member Program screenings for their family members, and he wanted to submit this topic for discussion to the group. Ms. Vine expanded on this by adding that this was particularly an issue for families that utilize child and youth programs. These families are required to have an Exceptional Family Member Program screening and then are also required to have an identical, but additional, screening to participate in child and youth programs. She requested that with the enhancements brought by the technology focus area, child and youth program validation requirements be incorporated in the system so that only one screening is required and the system would feed both requirements. Mrs. Wright requested that Dr. Tyner take this request for implementation, and he concurred.

6. Brief to the council – outreach efforts to geographically-dispersed personnel: Cmdr. Hoegel introduced National Guard Bureau representative Mr. Tony Wickham for a brief on outreach efforts to geographically dispersed personnel and their families.

a. Summary: Mr. Wickman briefed that sharing best practices between states, such as the Illinois Joining Forces and Minnesota Beyond the Yellow Ribbon programs, is a strength of the National Guard Bureau system. The National Guard Bureau will collaborate with the American Legion Auxiliary to obtain Volunteers in Service to America personnel. The bureau is implementing a new community-based volunteer position at the state level and will continue to identify, actively pursue and form memoranda of understanding with national-level resources that can fill the gaps for services losing funding. Mr. Wickman concluded his presentation by stating that the National Guard Bureau will maintain links with Joining Forces and that states will continue to deepen relationships with local resource providers.

b. Discussion: Following Mr. Wickham's brief, Mrs. Wright recognized and welcomed Ms. Barbara Thompson, Ms. Christie Ortega and Ms. Karen Bolden, who joined the meeting via conference call. Consequently, Cmdr. Hoegel advised that the Military Family Readiness Council had a quorum and the gathering was thus an official meeting of the council, and, as such, members were free to deliberate and vote on recommendations. Mrs. Wright then opened the floor for questions and discussion related to Mr. Wickham's brief. Ms. Moakler requested a deeper look into transition issues, specifically how capacity can be expanded to address needs in the local community. Mr. Wickham highlighted how the National Guard Bureau uses the local family assistance centers and the Airman and Family Readiness Program offices to meet that need for National Guard and reserve personnel, though they are very busy, and clarified that these centers can do a warm hand-off with active-duty personnel as they transition as well. Mrs. Wright added that this issue had come up in a previous meeting with veterans service organizations and military service organizations and that she was committed to looking into new ways to collaborate and offer more robust services. As a follow-on to the conversation about VSOs and MSOs, Ms. Chandler requested the council look into the vetting process for these organizations, as she understands that it is particularly in-depth and therefore underutilized. Mrs. Wright requested Ms. Chandler provide information offline about the vetting process so that she could review and determine appropriate next steps. Ms. Benden and Mr. Wickham noted that funding in the National Guard comes from both the Army and the Air Force, as opposed to a single source. This creates different regulations, requirements and program execution protocols, which while sometimes similar, do differ in many ways. This is particularly noticeable, for example, when the child and youth programs of the Army and Air Force are compared, and the National Guard Bureau is actively working this issue. Rear Adm. Buck then posed a multi-pronged question, asking: (1) how bad outreach had been before Sept. 11, 2001 and how much it had improved, (2) how this improvement was measured, (3) how one knows when they have been successful and how far there is to go and (4) what the metrics of success are. Mr. Wickham replied that when Operation Iraqi Freedom started, the National Guard Bureau had only one person per state in family programs and that person handled everything. It quickly became apparent that more people were needed, so additional assets were obtained. Current metrics are the number of referrals made for services, and during the last fiscal year, over 2.6 million referrals were made. Ms. Randon reiterated the importance of leveraging communities to provide services to returning military personnel and their families, adding that the military's strong connections to community resources helps ensure that services are rendered for those most at risk

and that outreach efforts should be better integrated. Cmdr. Hoegel recommended holding further questions and dialogue until the open discussion time at the end of the meeting.

7. Brief to the council – Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff’s second term strategy: Cmdr. Hoegel introduced Col. Gina Humble, who outlined the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff’s second term strategy.

a. Summary: Col. Humble briefed that the Chairman recently published his second term strategy outlining four focus areas: achievement of national objectives in the current conflict, development of Joint Force 2020, renewal of commitments to the Profession of Arms and keeping faith with military families. To define actions required to keep faith with military families, a time continuum was envisioned, which included a period of service followed by a period of transition and then a period of reintegration back into civilian life. During the period of service, major actions include combating high-risk behaviors, creating an enduring mechanism for priority ranking of benefits and services most required by military families, developing policies and best practices for services to wounded warriors, and conducting general and flag officer outreach. The focus of the period of transition is the development and implementation of transition policy coupled with a joint force communication policy and improved transition outcomes. A large number of service members will transition out of the military in the next five years, so this is of immediate concern. There is a focus on implementing reintegration centers to expand state and community-based partnerships, as well as developing a narrative of continued service. Military members leaving active duty continue serving their communities once they become civilians.

b. Discussion: Mrs. Wright opened the floor to any questions or discussions based on Col. Humble’s brief. There were no comments.

8. Council discussions and deliberations: Cmdr. Hoegel opened the general discussion period by advising that this was an opportunity for council members to discuss any topics in greater detail that were brought up during the course of the council session or to suggest additional topics for study, briefing or fact-finding. He added that this was also an opportunity for members to propose new topics to explore in the future. He closed, advising Mrs. Wright that if there were time and if she desired, she could open the floor at the end of the session to the public for the chance to provide oral comments. Mrs. Wright opened the floor to the council members and asked if there were any recommendations for future briefing topics. The council members were reminded that Dr. Kelly would provide a brief on military spouse specific programs at the next council meeting.

a. Future topic recommendation #1: Mrs. Wright recommended for the September 2014 meeting that OUSD (P&R) brief the council on the results of the military health system review currently underway. The review focuses on the quality of care, access to care and safety in the military health system. To gather data, a team is being sent to do in-depth provider and patient town halls. For transparency, three outside experts helped to establish the metrics used for gathering data in those sessions, and another group of three experts will be used to analyze the data obtained. Any issue found will be made public and dealt with. The study will be complete and presented to the secretary of defense by Aug. 29, 2014.

b. Future topic recommendation #2: Mrs. Wright recommended that the council receive a brief on the results of the secretary of defense-directed review of tobacco use in the military upon the conclusion of that study (date to be determined). The OUSD (P&R) does not have any preconceived notions as to what they will recommend to the secretary of defense on this matter. However, they do know that the civilian and military leadership of the services will be involved in the study. This topic is important, as yearly \$1.6 billion is spent in the military medical system on tobacco-related illnesses, which could indicate a lack of health readiness in some parts of the force.

c. Future topic recommendation #3: Ms. Chandler requested an update on the three-year Family Readiness System needs assessment. Cmdr. Hoegel took this note for action.

d. Future topic recommendation #4: Ms. Chandler requested an update on the status of efforts to present more family programs online. Mrs. Wright advised that OUSD (P&R) would query the services to determine what programs are offered online and report results back to the council. If any gaps are identified, the council can look into how to mitigate those gaps.

e. Future topic recommendation #5: Ms. Chandler reiterated her desire to have the council look into the vetting process of military service organizations and veterans service organizations. She will provide this data to Mrs. Wright for initial review and consideration for inclusion in a Military Family Readiness Council briefing.

f. Future topic recommendation #6: Ms. Thompson requested a brief on current services and resources available to military family caregivers, how to properly elevate the needs of these caregivers and how the council can support them in their important work. Ms. Vine affirmed this request and added that she would like to specifically be briefed on the services provided by non-governmental organizations, the Department of Defense and Department of Veterans Affairs. Mrs. Wright stated that this was an important topic not only to OUSD (P&R) but also to the first lady, Dr. Biden and Mrs. Dole, and took the recommendation for action.

g. Future topic recommendation #7: Ms. Moakler recommended a brief about the interaction between the Department of Defense, the services and communities in the area of family advocacy, domestic abuse and child abuse and neglect. Ms. Thompson and Ms. Williams put together a rapid improvement event on domestic abuse and violence led by Ms. Robertson. The event identified a number of opportunities to improve services in these areas, and OUSD (P&R) is reviewing the resulting recommendations and determining a way ahead. Ms. Robertson will provide a brief on this topic at a future council meeting.

Ms. Benden requested that when any of the above topics are discussed, that the nuances of the National Guard and reserve experience be addressed in the briefing. Mrs. Wright concurred and thanked the council members for their efforts to create a robust list of recommendations for future briefs and noted that the session was coming to an end. She added comments thanking Cmdr. Hoegel for his hard work in planning and executing the council meeting.

9. Public oral comment opportunity: Before closing the meeting, Mrs. Wright opened the floor for public comment. Cmdr. Hoegel directed speakers to step up to the microphone, to speak clearly and to state their name and affiliate organization. Two individuals made comments. Mr.

Jeremy Hilton, an Air Force spouse with no organizational affiliation, stated the importance of the council as the only venue where spouses have a seat at the table. He requested the council make formal recommendations to the Military Compensation Retirement Modernization Commission. Mrs. Wright advised that the Military Compensation Retirement Modernization Commission meetings are public and that anyone can attend to make recommendations. However, she stated she would reach out to the chairman, get his thoughts on this request and report back to the council. Ms. Karen Driscoll with Autism Speaks expressed her appreciation of OUSD (P&R)'s health care review and asked how advocacy groups and family support organizations like hers could help distribute the information regarding upcoming military health care review town hall meetings. Mrs. Wright advised that a website had been set up with everything someone would want to know about the military health review. She went on to state that she thought the website was www.health.mil, but she was not certain and would have to confirm that and get back to Ms. Driscoll. Mrs. Wright added that the Department of Defense is getting ready to introduce a new pilot program for autism that will run from July 2014 until 2018. She advised that she will bring the one-page information brochure on the pilot to the next meeting for Ms. Driscoll. Ms. Driscoll replied that she had read the federal notice and that she did see some program improvements, which is encouraging. However, she noted that families are still waiting for the policy details and requested that as soon as that information was available, the department reach out to family service organizations and advocacy groups to share that information. Mrs. Wright agreed to do so, and Ms. Driscoll agreed to help communicate the received information to beneficiaries.

10. Administration: Mrs. Wright informed the council members that the proposed date of the next Military Family Readiness Council is Aug. 18, 2014. Cmdr. Hoegel suggested that he take the list of recommended briefings, send them to Mrs. Wright for review and then to the council members for prioritization. Once they are prioritized, the top three or four briefs will be scheduled for the next council meeting. Mrs. Wright reminded the council members that their request from the previous meeting was to meet four times a year instead of two, though only two are required. She went on to state that at the August meeting, she would like to set the four meeting dates for the coming fiscal year in order to establish a battle rhythm. Additionally, she apologized that the minutes from the previous meeting were not done on time. She promised to have the minutes from the day's meeting available within 30 days so that members would have time to review them before the next council meeting. Finally, she noted that the pre-briefs for the next council meeting would be sent out prior to the meeting so that members would have time to review them and jot down questions or comments based upon the slide deck.

11. Closing Remarks: Mrs. Wright closed the meeting, thanking everyone for the time that they provided to discussing these important subjects. Whereupon she concluded the meeting at 3:06 p.m.

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Military Family Readiness Council Meeting, June 25, 2014

Submitted by:

Certified by:

//SIGNED//

//SIGNED//

Peter Hoegel Jr.
Commander, United States Navy
DFO, Military Family Readiness Council

Jessica L. Wright
Under Secretary of Defense
for Personnel and Readiness
Chair, Military Family Readiness Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.